

Appl. No. 09/880,856
Amdt. dated March 18, 2005
Reply to Office Action of Dec. 20, 2004

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

I. Introduction

- Claims 1-31 remain in this application.
- Claims 1-31 stand rejected.
 - Claims 1, 6-9, 14, 18-22, 26, and 28-31 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C.102(e) as being anticipated by Vantalon et al. (US 6,628,891).
 - Claims 10, 12-13, 15-16, 23-25, and 27 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C.103(a) as being unpatentable over Vantalon et al. (US 6,628,891) in view of Epstein et al. (US 6,530,021).
- Claims 1, 18, 19, and 31 are independent claims.

II. Amendment to the Specification

The examiner noted that continuity information is missing from the specification. To correct this, the specification has been amended to include the following priority statement: "This application is a continuation of international application number PCT/US00/00077, filed on Jan.5, 2000, which claims the benefit of Provisional Application No. 60/144,833, filed Jan. 6, 1999."

Applicant would like to point out to the Examiner that the present application is a continuation of a PCT application No. PCT/US00/00077, filed with the United States Receiving Office on January 5, 2000. This continuing application was filed using form PTO/SB/13/PCT, on which was an explicit request that the specification be amended to

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reference this application. A copy of this form is attached to this paper for the examiners review.

The PCT application made a priority claim to United States Provisional Patent Application No. 60/144,833, filed on January 6, 1999. This claim for priority was made on form PCT/RO/101, Box No. VI entitled "Priority Claim." A copy of this form is also attached to this paper for the examiners review.

Because of the aforementioned chain of priority, entry of this amendment to the specification is respectfully requested.

III. Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e)

Claims 1, 6-9, 14, 18-22, 26, and 28-31 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C.102(e) as being anticipated by Vantalon et al. (US 6,628,891). Vantalon has a domestic priority date of Nov. 19, 1999. As explained in section II of this amendment, the present application has a prior domestic priority date of Jan. 6, 1999. Therefore, because the present application predates the Vantalon reference, withdrawal of these rejections is respectfully requested.

IV. Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 10, 12-13, 15-16, 23-25, and 27 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C.103(a) as being unpatentable over Vantalon et al. (US 6,628,891) in view of Epstein et al. (US 6,530,021). As described in section III, the present application predates the Vantalon reference; therefore, withdrawal of these rejections is respectfully requested.

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V. Conclusion

For all of the reasons advanced above, Applicant respectfully submits that the application is in condition for allowance and that action is respectfully solicited. If there are any outstanding issues that might be resolved by an interview or an Examiner's amendment, the Examiner is requested to call Applicants' agent at the telephone number shown below.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required for this amendment, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 50-1450.

In the event that an extension of time is required, or may be required in addition to that requested in a petition for an extension for time, the Commissioner is requested to grant an extension a petition for that extension of time which is required to make this response timely and is hereby authorized to charge any fee for such an extension of time or credit any overpayment for an extension of time to Deposit Account No. 50-1450.

Respectfully submitted,



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